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"Most congregations are sympathetic to the United Church stand on South Africa, but [that is] qualified by [the fact] that most United Churches are not prepared to back up that theoretical position with concrete action."

He said that he is not certain if it is a lack of ability or desire on the part of the congregations, but concedes that at "some point we are just not strong enough in our commitment to justice."

Mr. Levan, who has worked with various anti-apartheid groups including the Queen's divestment campaign in the early 1980s, said he does not feel that the anti-apartheid movement is particularly strong in Eastern Ontario.

Rev. Mark Parent, pastor of First Baptist Church, said that his church is "whole-heartedly" in favor of the head-office's anti-apartheid stance. The Baptist church's traditionally strong stand on separation of church and state has led them to shy away from some politically-contentious issues, said Mr. Parent. In an effort to remain clear of any involvement with the state, Baptist churches have often "acquiesced to those in the power positions" and not taken a stand on social justice issues, he said.

Those in the head offices and the coalition rooms do recognize that they are fighting a difficult battle, trying to convince both the people in the pews and the government of their position.

"Sometimes we feel like we're preaching to the converted. As far as changing people's minds — that's a longer, slower process," said Jim Hodgson from the Canadian Council.

"There was a time when Canadians tended to identify themselves with the whites in South Africa for historical reasons," he said, adding that one no longer sees letters in the church media supporting South Africa.

He does claim some element of success for the churches' advocacy and education programs.

"We have been a part of those groups that have swayed public opinion," he said.

The Canadian churches, who are setting their course on the advice of their church partners in South Africa — especially the South African Council of

Churches and the Catholic bishops council, are becoming a well-respected and feared lobby group, said Mr. Levan.

Mr. Levan said that he has heard business executives say that the type of lobbying they fear most is from church groups — an element of society that cannot be easily dismissed.

One of the tactics used by the taskforce is active or responsible shareholdership — an alternative form of political protest to divestment. Since 1975 the taskforce has encouraged shareholders in banks and companies doing business in South Africa to attend the shareholders' meetings and, as of the early 1980s, has helped them bring forward shareholders' resolutions asking the company to review its investments in South Africa.

Mr. Levan said that when "upstanding" church people who rise at a shareholders' meeting and embarrass the company president with detailed questions about the firm's holdings and investments, that is an effective method of applying pressure on companies involved in South Africa.

Molra Hutchison, co-ordinator of the taskforce, said that it is hard to measure effectiveness of active shareholding because it is impossible to know what would have happened if the issue had not been raised.

"What has been effective has been the persistence of the churches raising the issue year after year," she said.

The churches admit that the extent to which the government is feeling any effective pressure to change their stance is difficult to ascertain.

"The government is feeling the pressure," said Mr. Hodgson.

"They listen — they are also listening to other people and they haven't been persuaded by our point of view," said Mr. Hodgson.

Mr. Kenny said that he feels the churches are being listened to, but need to "make more noise." He said that the time for the churches to quietly co-operate with the Mulroney government is gone.

"This government has no interest in following through on its past promises on South Africa," said Mr. Kenny.

The council is also angry at the government's change of tone on South Africa, said Mr. Hodgson.

"We are not departing in any way from what we've said in the past. We're saying that the government has departed from what it was saying," he said.

Mr. Kenny said he doubts that these initiatives on the part of the council and the taskforce as well as other anti-apartheid groups influenced the outcome of the Canberra conference. He said he does hope that the attention gained by these actions has created a climate of awareness and concern on the part of Canadians.

Mr. Hodgson said he was pleased with the level of public awareness about the importance of the foreign ministers' conference and said that now is a good time to increase pressure on the South African government.

The letter from the taskforce to Joe Clark, a copy of which was sent to the prime minister, outlined that this meeting in Australia, as a forerunner for the meeting of the Commonwealth heads of state in October, comes at a crucial time because the South African government is in a position in which it must reschedule billions of dollars of foreign loans in 1990. Increased economic sanctions at this time will make it increasingly "difficult and expensive for South Africa to maintain apartheid," said Mrs. Hutchison.

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